

## A Periodic Interview with the King of Terrors

January 1779–December 1785

By James Meikle

1730-1799

*January 5, 1779.* One year is ended—and another year has begun. So, soon shall my life's short year be finished—and eternity begin. O that my heart could leap at the thought of eternity. What proof shall I give that I am born from above, if I have no desire to arrive to my native country, to my father's house? I must depart hence, for this present wilderness-world is not my rest. But why is it that I am so averse from entering on my everlasting rest, and joining the heavenly throng? An acquaintance who has been long in trouble, is this day a lifeless corpse, and a near neighbor appears nearly to be so. And I cannot promise myself another night's lodging in this *inn*, that has entertained me for many years. O to meditate much! O to converse often with the invisible realities of eternity! Thus shall I shake myself free from encumbrances of time, and long to set out for the eternal and changeless world.

*January 26, 1779.* How low may I be brought at death, like my dear acquaintance, who cannot speak! He attempts it—but the word dies away before it can be understood. O! then, to speak much for God while I can be heard. And that my soul may speak to God in aspirations of faith and love, when I can no more converse with men; for God can hear me, and be near me to the very last.

*February 2, 1779.* My neighbor is now no more, and in a little while my neighbors shall also say of me—'he is no more!' I cannot positively say where he makes his eternal home—for the state of the dead is only known to the living God. But this I can say, that in a little while I, my very self, shall arrive at my eternal home. O to prepare, O to improve for that fixed, for that final state!

*March 2, 1779.* Still some are dropping into the grave, to keep us always in mind of our latter end. But some sail with full assurance to glory. We see a saint laid on a bed of languishing, and confined there for weeks, months, or years; we see him also suffering great sicknesses, and tossed with sore pain, and are ready to wonder at the conduct of Providence. But O how one moment of the heavenly glory balances all! In these 'ages of uninterrupted bliss', all the 'moments of misery' are forgotten. It does not matter how low I am brought at the hour of death—since I shall be exalted to super-eminent glory. Verily, the sufferings of this present time, the anguish of a sick-bed, and the pangs of death, are not

worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us. O for steady views of that triumphant heavenly state, while traveling through this land of trouble and anguish!

*April 6, 1779.* Amidst the uncertainties through which I press, death will not disappoint me. And the certainty of my approaching death may make me smile in the face of all intervening trials and tribulations. When wisdom and kindness characterize the conduct of my friend—it would be unfair to complain of him; how much more so, then, to arraign the providence of God, when infinite wisdom and tender loving kindness are conspicuous through the plan—and will finish the scene in my happy death, and triumphant entry into the world of bliss!

*May 4, 1779.* Every time I add a line to this *Monthly Memorial*, I should do it as the last, for some line must surely be my last. O! then, to write a hearty farewell to time, and all the things of time—and a cordial welcome to eternity, and the timeless unchanging world!

*May 30, 1779 (Birthday).* This Memorial, since begun, has seen fourteen birthdays—and who can tell but I may soon enter on my eternal inheritance and bid farewell to all below? Now I should work hard, because the day is far spent, and the night is approaching. And I should walk fast, because my sun is low.

*June 1, 1779.* There is but one change of great import—death. There is but one thing needful—salvation. Now, if salvation is secured, my change will be pleasant. And all intervening vexations will disappear. I am so near the eternal world, that I ought to give myself very little concern with this perishing world—where I am so soon to be no more.

*June 26, 1779.* A minister of the gospel, an eloquent preacher, is called to his eternal home. In prospect of his approaching change, he built nothing on what he had taught to others, on his high attainments, on his sweet experience; but discarding them all—he came as a needy sinner to an all-sufficient Savior. He held firmly to the gospel of free grace—which was his confidence for eternity.

*August 4, 1779.* A belief of death, and the subsequent eternal realities—is a noble balance for everything in the world. Nothing need exalt, nothing need depress—that soul which in a little while, is to bid farewell to everything below.

*September 1, 1779.* This day a near neighbor lies a lifeless corpse. And tomorrow my wife arrives home. In my house there is festivity in every face, and cheerfulness in every heart. In my neighbor's house there is sadness in every countenance, and sorrow in every heart. I well remember his bridal day—and may see his burial too. Just so, many who see my bride brought home, may see us both carried to our long home. A scene so mournful, sent so near to me, is a caveat against excess of joy in a scene so delightful to me.

*September 2, 1779.* This day the bell tolls for the interment of my neighbor—now his state is fixed for eternity! O to remember this in the midst of all my mirth and rejoicing! When our life draws near its end, one day spent in vanity will gall us greatly; nor will it excuse me to neglect closet or family duties, that it was my wedding-day. I must not forget God, or myself—because my house will be crowded with cheerful guests.

*September 7, 1779.* I am entered into another relationship—but I am not out of the reach of death. Death will tear asunder every tie, and separate the nearest and dearest friends. But if united to Christ, it will not separate from him!

*December 7, 1779.* This day an acquaintance is to be interred, whose last illness lasted only a few hours. O how sudden was the call to appear at the great tribunal! He cannot wait to send for wife and children, brother or sister. But the first news of his sickness is—that he has died! O! then, as **I am walking on the brink of eternity**, may my meditation soar toward eternal things, and may my latter end never be out of my mind. Again, if my friends go abroad from me, or I go abroad from them—if death arrests us along the way, let us not be greatly surprised. But if we meet together again in safety, let us be thankful to the kind Preserver of our life.

*December 16, 1779.* Some days past I have been tossed with pain, and then how long did the nights and days seem! But I reprove myself for not being filled with gratitude, while I enjoy health of body, and serenity of mind. It is folly to wait for the short winter-day to begin my journey in. Just so, to defer being serious about eternal realities, until my body is broken with disease, and my mind is distracted with melancholy—is folly and sin.

*January 1, 1780.* I have ended one year, and begun another. But O to loose my grips on temporal vanities—and fasten them on eternity! It cannot be very long before I join the heavenly multitude!

I confess that my cares grow. But I may cast, not only a few—but all my cares, upon him who cares for me.

*May 2, 1780.* Approaching death has some thing solemn in it. But it surely need not much worry me to leave my clay cottage—and go to dwell in a splendid palace; to drop an house of mortality—and go to dwell in a house not made with hands.

*May 30, 1780 (Birthday).* The day of death to the saint shall be the birthday of his soul into the glorious eternal world! O! then, how happy am I, if this event, which is so melancholy among the ungodly, shall be my better birthday, and join me to the general assembly and church of the first-born. Four days ago a man is abroad on business, and the next day is a corpse. A sudden call! On the first day, he does his earthly business—and next day appears before the Judge of all the

earth! O! then, to be waiting for death, like one who watches for the morning-light, that I may commence my heavenly journey to my Savior's throne.

*July 4, 1780.* Amidst the kindness of my Heavenly Father, who has been pleased to send a living child into my family, I desire to remember that the mother who bore it, that myself and the child—are mortal, and that I may expect death to come the oftener into my house. O! then, to prepare for death, not only in myself—but in my nearest and dearest friends.

*August 1, 1780.* My gracious God has been pleased to send trouble, first on the child, and then on the mother—to keep us mindful that they are mortal. I am now a broader mark for the arrows of death; while she who is my other self, or she who is part of myself, or my own self—may be shot at and fall. But if none of us are hurt by the second death, it will not matter much who dies first. Yet he who can preserve one alive, can with equal ease preserve any number.

*October 3, 1780.* I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made, and I shall be wonderfully raised up anew in the resurrection. My substance shall not be hidden from you, when I am laid up in secret in the silent grave; you will still have a concern for me, though concealed in the lowest parts of the earth. My members shall be written in your book, though being dissolved into dust; yet, by your divine power, they shall be fashioned anew, and put on perfection and glory. How precious are these thoughts of your kindness unto me. O God! How great is the sum of them!

*February 6, 1781.* This day I would desire to take farewell of everything below—for the day is fast approaching that I must part with all below. I have friends that are near and dear, and pleasant; and to lose them, or leave them, I confess, must give me pain. But there is a nobler and higher relation, in which I would wish to lose all inferior ties, and with fortitude meet final death. For if I and mine belong to the household of God—I can suffer no loss, though death should tear my family to pieces, and not leave one alive.

*April 3, 1781.* Some time ago death had carried off all my near relatives. And now, when kind Providence had given me new relatives, death is thinning them very fast. My wife's father's cousin is to be interred today, and her own cousin tomorrow; her affectionate mother is lying on her death-bed, and my wife herself labors under a dangerous disease. In the midst of all, I desire to have my eye towards the Lord of life.

*April 5, 1781.* My mother-in-law has gone to her rest, and O how sweet the heavenly rest is, to one who has had a toilsome time below! No more solicitude or care about family affairs—no more tempestuous passion, or mental tumult—no more anxious concern about the things of time! O happy change! O triumphant state! But, alas! that saints, eminent saints, should be so silent on the borders of eternity, and so full of fears and doubts—as if religion were just a

'golden uncertainty', a delusive dream. Indeed, she had the sweet assurance of heavenly bliss.

*May 1, 1781.* Some days ago, a son, who promised to be a comfort to his parents, is carried off by death! How sad the stroke, for, besides him, they had neither son nor daughter! O divine sovereignty! God often passes by many a large flourishing family, and takes a poor family's *all*—and still does no wrong! God can do what he pleases with his own—and none may find fault with him.

In another home a child falls into a well—and perishes! And next day, in another quarter, a child falls into a kennel—and also perishes! O the severe reflections! O the tender feelings of these poor parents! But in everything sovereignty must be adored.

My wife still labors under her illness—a long lesson of our mortality.

*August 7, 1781.* I have a remembrance of my own mortality still in the continued distress of my dear wife. O how averse to think of parting with my dearest friend! But part we must, one time or other, though I hope we shall meet when time is no more, to part no more forever.

*September 4, 1781.* In the present harvest work, I see a lesson that the world shall have an end. That the angels, those heavenly reapers, shall reap the whole field. The righteous, like the good grain, shall be laid up in the heavenly granary; and the wicked, like the worthless tares, cast into everlasting flames.

*September 21, 1781.* My wife, who has been long in distress, has delivered a dead child. And though the infant's eyes have never seen the light, yet its soul has a full view of the eternal world. And though the little boy is buried with very little ceremony, yet the immortal part has made its solemn appearance at the bar of God, and entered as fully into eternity, as the oldest person who ever died. O how short while in being—before his state is fixed forever!

*October 2, 1781.* A monument of death in my own house—one of my own children—should be a lasting remembrance. Let this be fixed in my mind—that it cannot now be long until *I* arrive at *my* fixed state.

*October 8, 1781.* My dear wife, who has long been in bodily trouble, seems now on the borders of eternity. For a husband to lose his dear wife, is the sharpest affliction that can befall him. But it is a sweet reflection, that such a near relation is going to such a triumphant state. As my grief may have an excess in it—as my loss is very great—I will bring an excellent antidote against it—even what she shall be and enjoy in that heavenly state.

1. Then, though she has been long detained from public ordinances, yet there she shall be so perfect, that she shall need neither sermons nor sacraments—

because God and the Lamb are the temple there.

2. Though a sickly body was her burden here—yet there she shall see the face of God, and serve him with heavenly alacrity and immortal strength.

3. Though her prayers sometimes astonish me, (as it was her custom to pray nightly with me) yet there her views shall be seven times brighter, and her praises seven times sweeter than they were below!

4. Her society shall be those who, like herself, have come out of great tribulation, washed their garments, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and are forever before the throne of God. Neither sinner nor imperfect saint shall be there.

5. She shall be so full of God and of glory, that to lament her loss would be as unfitting—as it would be wicked to envy her felicity. To see our friends advanced to such heavenly honor and unfading joys—is worth the tears, the prayers, the fasts, the wrestlings, and supplications of our whole life. Now, when my nearest friend is going to the actual enjoyment of it—is it not a contradiction to be dejected or sad? How soon is she to be, like the angels of God—above sin, and above sorrow! And could I see the glorified soul of my dear wife, I would take it for the spirit of some being more than human. And O the heavenly employment she enters into, on the back of all her dying pangs—and is ravished with forever in the divine presence!

*October 10, 1781.* For some days my dear wife has not spoken a sentence, nor lifted her eye—so that she has now no more to do with earthly things. O! then, to improve—time while it is mine—health while it is mine—speech while I can move my tongue—sight while I can lift my eye.

*October 14, 1781.* Yesterday, in the hopes of a glorious resurrection, I buried the dust of a dear and beloved wife—but have not words to express my sorrow.

*October 22, 1781.* On a looking back, I find that my wedding and a neighbors's burial were on the same day. The reflections I then made are now, alas! realized. And it is some satisfaction, that amidst the scenes of mirth, and seasons of joy—we did not forget our latter end.

*November 6, 1781.* Two weeks ago, I took off a poor patient's leg, with a view to preserve his life and recover his health. The operation was painful and much dreaded—but now seeming to do well, is approved of. Infinite wisdom, then in the death of my dear wife, has noble ends in view—to wean me from the world—to loosen my affections from the creature—to preserve the graces in my soul alive—to prepare me for death—to ripen me for glory.

We make a bouquet of flowers, and enjoy them for their beauty and fragrance.

But they soon wither, lose their beauty, and begin to decay. O! then, that our faith may smell as these flowers of paradise—the perfections of God—the love and grace of the Savior, the stability of the covenant, etc. these are flowers we may carry with us down to the chambers of death, and prevent ourselves from suffering in the putrefaction of the grave.

*November 22, 1781.* There is one error that universally prevails, and that is—to hide from mortals their mortality, and that even within a few days of their death! The cause of this conduct is the natural desire all men have for life—and the natural horror against death. The patient is deceived on all hands, and, what is odd—he does not wish to be undeceived. The physician misleads him with false hopes of recovery; the friends conceal their fears and their tears from him; every good symptom is magnified, and every symptom of danger is concealed or diminished. And thus he is buoyed up with hopes of recovery, and hindered from thinking seriously on death—until the disease seizes on the brain, and deprives him of reason! Now he can neither speak nor think of death—that solemn change which is to rush him into eternity!

Thus I have dealt too much with my dying friends, and thus my friends may deal with me when dying. But, O! to be so habitually prepared for death, that I may not be surprised when it comes. And though nature may shudder and shrink in prospect of death, yet let faith in him who died for me, and now lives for evermore, triumph over this king of terrors!

*November 28, 1781.* If the saints in glory know one another, as no doubt they do—there I shall see my dear wife—whose death I now lament—looking vastly lovely with heavenly beauty. Not the beauty which can be ravaged by sickness, or lost in death—but the beauty of holiness. And as I shall then be more susceptible of the charms of heavenly beauty, I shall love her in another manner than I did before; and not only her—but all my other glorified friends, and all the redeemed.

*December 4, 1781.* I desire this day again to recall my thoughts to serious and solemn things—for this purpose I am afflicted—to this end God sends death into my family. And will I yet say, in the hand of him who slays my dearest comforts—that *I am immortal*? I shall soon go to my deceased friends—they shall never return to me. And I know not but, like some of them—I shall be deprived of speech at my death. O! then, to recommend true religion by my daily walk and conversation.

*December 22, 1781.* For some days past, I have had a violent pain in my back—a disorder new to me. I could not stoop. I dared not laugh nor incline to either side. Yes, it would even awaken me out of my sleep, when I attempted to move.

But, alas! instead of expecting death, which every disease is a reminder of—how did I hold fast my life, and anxiously wish to recover! Had I such a share in my

prince's favor, that he had promised to send for me soon to dwell with him in his palace; would I not look like a madman if I was afraid that every letter that I received from him contained an order to come to his palace—and wished it might rather be about anything else? The application is easy. O! when shall I long to change my dwelling, and to come home to my Lord and Savior! My pain is greatly removed. And O! that my stupidity may not remain.

*January 1, 1782.* Though I have ended the last year with grief and mourning, I would wish to begin the new year with God, and plead for the comfort of his Holy Spirit while below. I reprove myself for one thought—that death deals with saints as an angry sovereign—when it only brings them to their Father's house. Of old the prophets used similitudes, and our Savior himself taught by parables; then, let me use a simile familiar to all—

A man receives a farm from a great king, which lies on the confines of the country, and therefore exposed to the frequent incursions of enemies. It is situated on the cold mountains, so it is continually harassed with storms and tempests. Also, the soil being barren, the crops are small. The water is brackish. The comforts of life there are few. Also, from the unwholesome marshes around it—sickness is prevalent in his family.

But the king, being gracious to him—has promised him another farm, pleasantly situated in the heart of the country, where an enemy was never heard of. There tempests never blew. There a river of the most wholesome water nourishes his fields, and trees of every fruit adorn the banks. There health and long life characterize the climate, and the increase of everything exceeds his expectation. So that he has not only all the conveniences—but all the comforts, and all the luxuries of life. Besides all this, the mansion of the king stands in the neighborhood, where he is invited as often as he desires.

Now, in the mean time, the king intimates to him, that his wife and some children must come to the new property; and when the king thinks it proper—he will send also for him; which he assures him will not be long. Well, the wife and children are taken to the new property. But what would his neighbors think—should they find him in tears at the event? especially those poor tenants, who, having displeased their king, were in a short time to be sent to the most inhospitable climate, where eternal tempests dash, and enemies of the most savage disposition dwell—and without any hopes of ever changing their situation!

*February 5, 1782.* I confess I am still much in the dark about *the state of disembodied souls*. But I know that the communion between God and the departed saints shall be most intimate and uninterrupted. Though I have visual demonstrations of death daily; yet the eternal and unchanging world is an unknown world to me—were it not for Scriptural revelation, and faith in that revelation—where what is told is not so much to satisfy curiosity, and remove all doubts—as to support the soul, and exercise faith. And may not my soul be



supported in view of death, when told—that death shall not separate from God's love; that in his presence there is fullness of joy, and at his right hand pleasures for evermore; that the saints shall be set down with the Lamb on his throne, that his servants shall see his face, and his name be on their foreheads, and thus, in the enjoyment of all possible happiness, shall be forever with the Lord?

*April 2, 1782.* When one who is going home to his father's house, sees that his journey is nearly finished, he may address himself thus: "As I am now not far from home, I need not have much concern about anything that can befall me. A bumpy road, or a boisterous day, shall not discourage me—for I have but a little way to go. It gives me no anguish that my pocket-money is almost spent—for I am so near my father's treasures. Nor shall the unkind usage I may meet with in my journey, from friends or foes, embitter my spirit—for I shall soon enjoy the endearments of the best of fathers. And though some of my dear companions in travel, whose company sweetened the way, have been called away from me, I will comfort myself against sorrow, because I shall have the sweet society of my father's whole family shortly."

Just so, I apply all this to myself, and am silent—for fellowship with the heavenly multitude, and communion with God and the Lamb—will counterbalance all afflictions in this world!

*May 30, 1782 (Birthday).* While I confess myself mortal, I also desire to acknowledge the many undeserved mercies I enjoy. How is it that the eternal God should care for a clod of dust? Yet, since he has given me his Son—what will he withhold? I lament my attachment to the things of time, and yet I would not wish that the shadow should go so many degrees back on the sun-dial of my life.

*June 4, 1782.* My birthday from my mother's womb, brought me only into an infantile state. But I have another birthday before me, the day of death—which shall usher me into the world of perfect men. As the mother's sorrow is forgotten for joy that a child is born into the world; so the sorrows of death, and the pangs of death, shall be lost in the joy of a soul entered on the triumphant heavenly state—the state of glory!

*June 14, 1782.* My child is this day distressed with the measles. And, as a parent, it is natural that I should have my fears that she may die. But, as a Christian parent, how should the salvation of her immortal soul lie near my heart? Death now may deprive me of a pleasant pretty child—and fill me with sorrow. But the second death is misery in the extreme—and calls forth sorrow beyond description. O that her soul may live before you! In the mean time **this is my comfort, that my God is the supreme disposer of all things, and will either give me himself along with my comforts, or himself in place of all my comforts.**

*June 21, 1782.* It has pleased the Father of mercies to recover my child—but I

would wish not to forget that she is mortal. And above all things, still to plead for her immortal soul. It is good to give all things into God's hand, who will deal well with his people, and make them sing of his mercy.

*August 7, 1782.* Why am I so averse to die? Why not leap for joy at an invitation to go to my Father's kingdom, and my Father's throne?

The troubles which attend me and the sins which attack me—make me weary of this life. And the joys that await me—make me long for my heavenly home. O! it is a sad proof that I know not—the emptiness of the creature, nor the sinfulness of sin, nor the nature of the heavenly bliss, nor the excellency of communion with God—that I do not loathe this life more, nor long for my heavenly home more.

*November 6, 1782.* The children of Israel seemed to have a mighty bar at last to their entering into the promised land, even Jordan overflowing all its banks? but when the priest's feet, who bore the ark of the covenant, touched the waters, they divided and left their channels dry, so that they had as sweet and safe a passage here as any part of their whole journey. Just so, though death is terrible to me, terrible to nature; yet Jesus, my great High Priest, who carries the ark of the everlasting covenant—can make death as safe a passage to me as any in all the course of my life.

*December 3, 1782.* The words of dying men have some weight with their friends. And if heaven would please to open my mouth on my death-bed, O how much I have to speak on God's behalf! but if tongue-tied in pious matters all my lifetime, can I expect a miracle at death? And indeed, what am I now but a dying man—only not confined to my room or my bed? and so I should open my mouth on spiritual themes.

*January 7, 1783.* The heir of an eternal world should not care much about a world which passes away. And such *oceans of bliss*, such *rivers of joy and spiritual delight*, such *wonders of glory*, and *overflowings of love*—shall be revealed to, and pour in on the soul, on the back of death, as shall quite blot out the remembrance of all the trifling distresses of our transitory life.

*January 16, 1783.* A few days ago, I rose in the night, and was seized with such a fit, that I thought I would immediately expire. In a minute the sweat broke, I returned to bed, and had no more illness. What an alarm had my death been both to my friends, and to the family where I was. Shall God speak once, yes twice, nay often, by the death of others, by the decease of my own dearest friends, and by such an attack as this—and I not be instructed that I am mortal?

*March 4, 1783.* This very day I labor under an illness—and every disease is an entrance to the grave—so not only the return of the day—but what I feel on the day, is a remembrance of my death. But with what folly am I chargeable, who, from the entrance to the grave, instead of looking into the 'house of silence'—am

looking on this side, and that side, to the flowery bank.

Indeed I have a dear child, that is but an infant, and who, in the event of my death, must become an orphan. But well may I commit her to my heavenly Father's care, who can do for her what no parent can. I may teach and instruct—but he only can teach to profit, he can give grace in the inward part. I may feed and dress the body—but he can array in the Surety's righteousness, and make her soul to feed by faith on the heavenly manna. And if thus clothed, and thus fed, it matters not how coarse her food, and how tattered her array—in other respects is.

*April 1, 1783.* I have often condemned in old men their *fondness for life*, and their *averseness to death*. But, as Eliphaz said to Job, "Now it has come upon me, and I faint; it touches me, and I am troubled." To talk with death at a distance, and to welcome him when he seems far away—is a kind of farce. But when laboring under some disease, and laid on a sick-bed, then to welcome death would display the fortitude of faith.

My heavenly Father has recovered me from my last illness. O to have this plague of mind removed—*A loathing of the heavenly felicity, and a delighting in the things of time!*

*May 6, 1783.* So vast is the heavenly bliss that the saints enter into at death, that it is surprising that any, who have the sweet assurance thereof—should be averse to leave a vain, a weary and a wicked world, to enter upon the full, the eternal enjoyment of God. If my faith had bright views of the celestial glory, and some foretastes of the joys of his right hand, instead of bewailing my wrinkles and my grey hairs—I would rejoice in seeing myself in the better country, and my Father's house!

*May 30, 1783 (Birthday).* How mistaken is the world in their estimate of things! Many keep their birthday with great pomp and festivity—while the prospect of their death spreads a gloom on their whole soul. Would not I take them for madmen—who would dance for joy at a ship, in which they were to sail, being launched into a stormy ocean, and exposed to tempests every day, and be dejected and sad when the ship appeared to make her destined port her desired haven? Just so, has not my birthday ushered me into a world of woe? Do not various storms agitate the sea of life? And yet how averse to enter into the port of Death, where the weary are at rest?

*July 1, 1783.* All nature is but a reminder of my latter end. The **sun** which shines so bright in a cloudless sky, sets and proclaims, "So, mortal, you must set in death." The **fields** which are covered with a luxuriant crop, are announcing the approach of harvest, when they shall be made naked and bare. And every night my **sleep** is the image of death, and my bed of the grave. And yet, in the midst of all, I am apt to forget my mortality and my approaching change.

*August 5, 1783.* He that is only a wayfaring man, and far on his journey, need not be much concerned for his accommodation for the few last nights—since he has almost arrived at home. This is the very case with me—I cannot be far from home. O that heaven may be my home! and the sooner there the better!

*October 7, 1783.* The prospect of approaching death should cut off all my superfluous cares. When my journey is but a step or two, why should a load of solicitude about it weigh down my mind? O how soon must I take farewell of all below! Did seven years of toil and labor, sweat and fatigue, seem but a few days to Jacob for the love he had to Rachel? And should not my love to my incarnate God, and the prospect of uninterrupted communion with, and full enjoyment of him—make a few weeks, days, and hours of sickness, and death, as nothing?

*November 4, 1783.* The king of terrors approaching to destroy my mortal frame, the Judge standing at the door to sit in judgment on me, and eternal ages opening before me—are views which might fill my soul with terror and despair. But if faith can see 'death' only as a servant bringing me home, the 'Judge' as acquitting and bestowing the crown, and 'eternity' as an endless summer of love and light, communion with and fruition of God—then may my soul be filled with transport and joy.

*December 2, 1783.* If I am an expectant of glory, I should, like Elijah, walk in constant expectation of my change. I am assured that the time of my death is not *now* far distant! It does not matter whether a fiery chariot in a few moments, or a fever in a few days, or a consumption in a few months—wafts me away from the company of my friends, and from the endearments of my nearest relations—since it shall join me to those who dwell in the heavenly presence, always beholding the glory of God, and singing the praises of redeeming love.

*January 6, 1784.* What amazing changes take place in the natural world! Storms and tempests distress the country; deluges of snow threaten the death of man and beast; and in some places it is impossible to travel from town to town. But the road to death is still wide open, and the high-way of the king of terrors can never be blocked up.

*March 3, 1784.* In comparison of eternal realities, what are the things which we meet with in the world—but mock pleasures, or mock pains? Not one of them can pass the door of death, or attend me to my eternal state. Why then am I such a fool as to grasp at shadows—or to be cast down at transient afflictions?

*April 6, 1784.* It is a melancholy sight to see any person evidently **dying**—without one serious thought of death. But this rises from a sight equally melancholy, so many people **living**—without one serious thought of God. But the prospect of a blessed eternity, is the best cordial against the troubles of life. O sweet period! when sin shall vex no more, when tempests shall yield to an eternal calm!

*April 22, 1784.* How melancholy, when we dare not follow the soul of our dead friend to his final state! or how stupid to believe him gone to bliss—merely because his lifeless carcass lies at rest! What trifles are crowns and thrones below—compared to the salvation of an immortal soul! Yet for what trifles will we go to the ends of the earth, curtail our life, and cast our soul away!

*April 29, 1784.* Might we suppose the soul of a lost sinner, permitted to spring from the bottomless pit and attend his own funeral; well might he be surprised to see among his friends so much care about his perishing dust, where there had been so little care about his immortal soul. How astonished to see so much gaiety in the countenances of all his acquaintances, who seemed to have forgotten that they were attending a funeral! And even to his near relatives might the agonized soul cry out, "You seem like those who are going to a merry dance—while I lament day and night in the dirges of the damned! Is the death of a son, a brother, a friend—so soon forgotten by you? Has a change so solemn, a state so terrible—no deeper impressions on your minds, O monsters of cruelty? Have you no fearful forebodings of following me to the same place of torment—where I must dwell, and roar, and blaspheme, and howl forever?"

*May 30, 1784 (Birthday).* I acknowledge the heavenly kindness that I am still alive. And all my soul is filled with joy, that my Lord rose victorious from the dead. And in virtue of his resurrection, I may cheerfully welcome death and the grave, because, being united to him, I shall rise to a glorious immortality, and an eternal Sabbath of rest.

*June 1, 1784.* It is pleasant, in such declining times—to hear of a young person dying in Christ. But it is said that I, an old person, should be averse to die. It is sin which makes death terrible and frightful, and darkens the heavenly state. For did my faith see the glories, and believe the bliss of paradise—I would leap in prospect of going there.

*June 29, 1784.* Some weeks ago, the mother of a large family lay so ill of a fever that all hopes of life were lost. Her son, who was eighty miles away, hastens to see his dying parent—but expects, before he can arrive, that she shall be no more. But to his sweet surprise, she is getting better, and her affectionate husband is overjoyed at her recovery. The youth, with cheerful step, returns to the place of his employment, until a second sad message calls him to see his father in his last moments. But before he arrives, his father is no more! He mingles grief with his disconsolate mother, and piously proposes to come and carry on his father's business, and rear up the younger part of the family, and nourish his mother in her old age. After going away to settle his affairs, he returns to settle in his mother's family. But O! adorable Providence, whose path is in the mighty waters, and whose footsteps are not known, the fever, that had afflicted the family, seizes him. And tomorrow he is to be laid by his father's side! Well, one prop after another may be removed, one comfort after another may perish—

but still God lives, and is the widow's judge in his holy habitation. In this providence, God says, "Let the widow trust not in a son—but in me."

*September 7, 1784.* In the midst of my various views and lawful schemes, O to remember that I am mortal! and not now far from the house of silence; and that the heavenly bliss will not be heightened by all the enjoyments of time, nor impaired by all the crosses and disappointments below. What traveler can pursue his journey by walking backwards? So, if my affections be still towards the world, I will but make poor progress heavenward. O to come up from the wilderness, like the spouse, leaning on my Beloved, looking towards the land of promise, and longing for the heavenly rest!

*October 5, 1784.* While I am in the world, I must be laying lawful plans and schemes for futurity, and yet I cannot know what a day will bring forth. I will therefore lay my account with two things:

1. That all my plans may be frustrated.
2. That death may take me away from all.

And in neither shall I be disappointed—for while I attend to the affairs of life, which is my duty—I desire not to forget that I am not far from the eternal world—and that God is the sovereign disposer of all things in this world.

*January 1, 1785.* On the first day of this new year, I would wish to put pen to paper, to impress myself with a belief, that I shall shortly put pen to paper no more. O how foolish, that while my years diminish, my earthly cares should multiply. Hence let me cast all my concerns into the hands of a gracious, wise and powerful Governor—and possess my soul in patience.

*January 4, 1785.* How inconsistent in a disciple of him who died, and rose, and revived, that he might be the Lord both of the dead and the living—in an expectant of immortality—to recoil from death, to cling to life, and quarrel with his physician for not recovering him! This I have seen. O to be able to act the noble opposite—to part pleasantly with my dearest relations, to leave life with mental serenity, and my ravished soul feel a holy impatience to fly to the embraces of my Savior!

*February 1, 1785.* When a ship has set sail for some far distant shore, though she sees no signs of land, yet, by the time she has been at sea—she can know assuredly, that she cannot be far distant from her desired haven. Just so, though I know not the hour of my departure, (nor would I wish to know,) yet, when I reflect how long I have lived, I may be assured, that death cannot be very far away.

*May 30, 1785 (Birthday).* I mention my birthday only to keep me in mind of the

day of my death. Some have been dead before they were born—but never one was born alive but had death to meet with.

At the burial of a friend, too often we behave as if we had nothing to do with death and eternity; the very occasion of our meeting is forgotten in our conversation. And were it not that the family were in mourning, we would seem rather convened for a wedding, rather than a funeral. Now, since we behave so in health, no wonder that in our last sickness we have not a word to speak in honor of true religion, or about a world to come. O my soul! Do not be united to their trivial assembly.

*June 7, 1785.* Of late, many people have gone from this country to settle in the American colonies. But not one of them, without making inquiry about, and obtaining some knowledge of, that colony to which they were to go. How terrible if I go into the eternal and changeless world—without the least knowledge of it! And, alas! How many die who have never had one serious thought about a future state, or in the least prepared for their change!

*August 2, 1785.* When I have thought and thought again on death, I remain much in the dark about *the disembodied state*. But I have no complaint, for the darker the scene, the stronger must be my faith. And the stronger my faith is, the more God is glorified. No matter *how*, or *when*, or *where* death take place, since the promise secures the heavenly presence to the valley of death. No matter how tremendous and unknown the regions of eternity appear—the promise secures that I shall be forever with the Lord. And with equal confidence and faith, may I leave my family behind on the divine providence and protection, having clusters of promises made on my behalf.

*November 2, 1785.* Every change of lot is bringing me so much nearer my great and final change. When kind Providence builds up a family, let it not be forgotten, that death will pull it down—by removing pleasant children, or tearing asunder the nearest connections. But, if I and my family be taken by adoption into God's family, every change shall be to the better, and death itself perform the office of a friend. And the person who first leaves the earthly stage may address the survivors in the words of the divine Redeemer, "I go to my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God."

*December 6, 1785.* Let me remember that every change is bringing me so much nearer the great and final change which awaits me. If the bride forsakes her friends, and her father's house—to dwell with her bridegroom; and if the bridegroom rejoices over the bride—how cheerfully should I forsake my dearest friends below, to dwell with my heavenly Beloved—raptured and astonished that such a glorious bridegroom will rejoice over me as his bride, his spouse! Here discord may embitter the husband and wife, and death must separate them at last. But in the heavenly state, discord is never known, and the mystical marriage is for eternity!

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